



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

SOUTH KOREAN NATIONAL PLEADS GUILTY TO ILLEGALLY EXPORTING MILITARY HELICOPTER ENGINES TO CHINA

-- A Former South Korean Military Official Is Also Prosecuted Overseas In Case --

NEW HAVEN, CONN. — Kevin J. O'Connor, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, and Robin Avers, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in New England, announced that **Kwonhwan Park** (a.k.a. Howard Park) a citizen of South Korea, pleaded guilty late yesterday to violating the Arms Export Control Act and conspiracy charges in connection with his effort to obtain military engines for the Black Hawk helicopter as well as other military items and divert them to China. United States District Judge Mark R. Kravitz accepted Park's plea of guilty yesterday in New Haven.

Under U.S. law, any individual or other entity seeking to export from the United States an item designated as a military defense article must receive permission from the U.S. Department of State. In the export application, the applicant must attest to the ultimate destination of the item. Further, any individual or entity seeking to export a military item is required to complete an application in which it is certified to whom the item will ultimately be sent.

As disclosed in court proceedings, for more than two years, Park was the subject of an investigation by Special Agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), after he and his Malaysian company, SGS, attempted to purchase Black Hawk military helicopter engines from Helicopter Support International, a company affiliated with Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford, Connecticut (the manufacturer of the Black Hawk helicopter).

Throughout 2001, Park and others provided documents to the U.S. Department of State asserting that the engines, worth more than \$1 million each, were destined for the Malaysian Army or the Korean Army. Park and SGS went so far as to submit sworn end-user certificates, with signatures from purported Malaysian and Korean military officials, claiming that the engines were for use by the Malaysian military and Korean Army.

Subsequent investigation by New Haven ICE agents in the United States and abroad confirmed that the signatures were fraudulent. The investigation revealed that two engines were actually shipped on April 8, 2002, arrived in Malaysia, and later were diverted to China. At that point, ICE agents had not been alerted to the shipment.

As the investigation continued, Park and his associates attempted to obtain four additional engines for the S70 Sikorsky military helicopter. Acting on a suspicion, General Electric, the manufacturer of the engines, notified agents in New Haven. According to statements made in open court today by the prosecutor, Park attested that the four additional engines were destined for the South Korean Army. Previous investigation by ICE agents had already confirmed that the South Korean Army had never ordered the engines.

Earlier this year, ICE agents were alerted on short notice that Park intended to enter the United States through San Francisco on March 27, 2004. ICE and DCIS agents tracked his movements and intercepted Park on April 1, 2004, at Dulles International Airport when he attempted to depart the United States on a plane bound for Beijing, China. An inspection of Park's luggage confirmed that he had in his checked bag and on his person a sophisticated night vision goggle system that was manufactured by a San Francisco, California corporation, and is a military item controlled for export.

Park was arrested based on a Complaint that was prepared and executed in the District of Connecticut at Bridgeport. A United States Magistrate Judge in Alexandria, Virginia, ordered Park detained and removed to the District of Connecticut. Park arrived in Connecticut on May 7, 2004, and has been detained without bond since that date.

Late yesterday, Park pleaded guilty to Counts 1 and 2 of a four-count Indictment returned by a federal grand jury sitting in Bridgeport. When he appears before Judge Kravitz on January 28, 2005, Park faces a maximum term of imprisonment of ten years on the illegal export charge and a maximum term of imprisonment of five years on the conspiracy charge. Park also faces a maximum fine of \$2,500,000.

"The U.S. Attorney's Office in Connecticut is at the national forefront in prosecuting illegal arms export cases," U.S. Attorney O'Connor stated. "This type of prosecution requires the tremendous skill of our federal investigative partners, and great cooperation from the many defense contractors here in Connecticut. We will continue to work diligently in order to prevent the illegal export of sensitive military technology."

Robin Avers, the ICE Special Agent-in-Charge, added, "U.S. critical technology is an important asset to our national security. However, in the wrong hands, the very same technology could be disastrous. Halting the illegal export of munitions and sensitive technology is a top priority for ICE. This case highlights the essential cooperation between law enforcement here and abroad as well as with companies in the private sector necessary to combat this problem."

U.S. Attorney O'Connor noted that the United States is working closely with the Government of South Korea in the investigation and prosecution of this matter. **Yung Jean Sohn**, a former South Korean military official and an officer with SGS – who with Park signed some of the documentation submitted to the U.S. State Department – was prosecuted in South Korea. Yung Jean Sohn pleaded guilty to forgery of official documents and has received an eight-month term of imprisonment.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Special Agents from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Office of Inspector General. This case is being prosecuted by Supervisory Assistant United States Attorney Robert M. Appleton.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.